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1964/08/05

Dear Mr.President,

I deem it necessary to personally inform you about the concern that we feel in connection with the events unfolding in the Gulf of Tonkin.

From the very outset I want to mention that we know about these events solely from those statements which have been made these days in Washington, from the published orders to the American armed forces, from the reports of the news agences and also from the statement, just published, by the spokesman of the High Command of the Vietnamese People's Army concerning the incident on August 2 in the Gulf of Tonkin. We do not have other information as yet. One thing is undisputable, however, - the situation there has sharply deteriorated and military conflicts are taking place near the coast of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Chinese People's Republic, in which warships of the U.S. Navy are participating as well as military planes based on American aircraft - carriers. Also obvious is the seriousness of these developments - indeed, it is impossible to rule out that they may mushroom into such proportions and turn in such a way that it will be difficult to say where they will stop.

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We do not know exactly now just what has happened there. But even irrespective of this the fact remains that the warships of the U.S. Navy have entered the Gulf which cuts deeply into the territories of the DRV and the CPR, and that it is from these ships that fire was opned and aircraft are being launched which according to the latest reports, are making strikes against objectives on the territory of the DRV. Suffice it to look at the map to convince oneself that except the DRV and the CPR there are no other states the territories of which ajoin the Gulf of Tonkin and that , consequently, the very fact of introduction of American warships in that Gulf under any circumstances cannot be viewed in any other way but as a military demonstration, as a challenge to the states whose shores are washed by that Gulf.

With all frankness I must say that if these actions of American warships and air forces parsue the aim of strengthening somehow the position of the corrupt and rotten South Vietnamese regime which exists - and this is no secret to anyone - only because of the foreign support, then such actions will not achieve the given aim. But to increase the danger of a serious military conflict - they can.

A question arises before me: have not clouds been deliberately darkened around the developments in the Gulf of Tonkin ? Is not the influence felt here by those quarters and persons who do not

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conceal their desire to inflame the passions, to pour oil on the flame and to whose militant frame of mind one should regard with great caution and restraint ? But if this influence is indeed real and if it has an ear , then another, more serious question arises - where the present developments can lead to ?

It would be unnecessary to speak in detail now about the enormous responsibility which our two powers bear, you personally as President of the United States and I as Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, in keeping the peace, in ensuring that dangerous events whichever area of the globe they begin with, would not become first elements in the chain of ever more critical and maybe irreversible events. I believe that you should agree with this. And if this is so, then at this moment it is most important to draw from this necessary practical conclusions and proceeding from this lofty responsibility to look at the sircumstances around the developments in the Gulf of Tonkin with maximum objectivity and to again and again weigh possible consequences.

I would not like here to give play to feelings although this, in all appearance, is justified by the situation. Because of lack of reliable information I confine myself to expressing those thoughts which follow from the main and undeniable fact, namely, that the warships and air forces of the United States have taken military action in the Gulf of Tonkin area.

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I want to emphasize that no one has asked the Soviet Government to address you in connection with the developments near the coast of the DRV and the CPR. If there appears a threat to peace, I am deeply convinced that we should not wait for requests or appeals from anybody but must act so as to remove that threat without delay.

I would like to hope that on your part there will be shown necessary composure and restraint in order to remove the military tension and stop defiant actions of the American armed forces in the Gulf of Tonkin area which may lead to an appropriate response from the other side.

Sincerely,

N. KHRUSHCHEV

August 5, 1964.

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